

Jefferson nickel gets a facelift from Uncle Sam

By Roger Boye

Engravers working for Uncle Sam have made subtle changes in the "tails-side" design of proof Jefferson nickels, changes that might increase the popularity—and value—of some 1982 proof sets on the coin market.

Specifically, craftsmen sharpened the lettering and other design features on a "master hub," from which dies for proof Jefferson nickels are made. Government spokesmen quoted by hobby newspapers said normal wear on the master hub had softened the design details, adding that the changes will be "noticeable."

Workers had made about 1.5 million proof nickels dated 1982 before the design was changed, and they will churn out at least 2.3 million more proof nickels with the revamped designs. Accordingly, 1982 proof sets containing a nickel with a less distinct tails-side design eventually may command a higher collector premium.

However, experts caution collectors not to expect windfall profits. In a weak coin market, the new nickel variety may create only a modicum of price advance.

Meanwhile, mint director Mrs. Donna Pope says Uncle Sam likely will include Kennedy half dollars in 1983 proof sets. Some hobbyists had predicted that production of the little-used coin soon would cease, partly because no 1982-dated half dollars will be made for circulation.

But in a Numismatic News interview, Mrs. Pope said the government has suspended, not discontinued, production of Kennedy halves for circulation.

"The likelihood of resuming production of half dollars is quite a bit brighter and more immediate [than of Susan B. Anthony dollars]," she told a correspondent. Kennedy halves are in 1982 proof sets.

● As expected, the World's Fair Committee has authorized the sale of an official [but non-government] medal commemorating the 1982 extravaganza in Knoxville.

The fair's "official medal"—made in three types of metals—depicts the Sunsphere, a 266-foot-tall structure topped by a glass globe, as well as two other buildings on the fairgrounds.

A bronze specimen costs \$6.50; a 1-ounce, pure silver specimen, \$29.50; and a tiny 14-karat-gold medal [58 percent pure gold], \$25. To order, send a check to Allen Metals Mint, P.O. Box G-1, Oak Ridge, Tenn. 37830 [include \$1.75 extra for postage].

The medals also are on sale at the fair.